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Finding Thankfulness During COVID Recovery and Quarantine

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- During this Thanksgiving season, students at Cedarville University are thankful for a rather strange experience: quarantine and isolation due to COVID-19. While these experiences are extremely hard, William Imfeld, a sophomore allied health major from Danville, Kentucky, and Chantel Smithers, a junior Christian education and youth ministries major from Zanesfield, Ohio, look back at this difficult season with gratitude.

Imfeld tested positive for COVID on September 14 and spent 10 days in isolation.

"I can't stress enough how weird it is not to be able to taste and smell even though I didn't have a stuffy nose," said Imfeld. "But it really made me grateful that God made the world in a way that allows us to enjoy it with our senses."

At first, the hardest part for Imfeld was missing out on the activities he saw on his social media feeds, so he decided to fast from social media and use the extra time he had to focus on his faith.

"I really wanted to make sure that I used the time well, whether that was pouring into the people that I knew who were also in isolation with me or reading the Scriptures with the extra time that I had," said Imfeld.

The experience reminded Imfeld about the importance of being with other Christians. With many of the guys in Imfeld's residence hall in isolation or in quarantine, they organized a worship night over Zoom to sing, pray and read the Bible.

"Faith isn't meant to be walked alone," noted Imfeld. "Our Zoom worship night embodied what it means to be encouraging to one another and continually edifying one another."

During isolation, Imfeld read the books of Joshua and Judges in the Bible. In these books, he noticed how many times the nation of Israel was reminded of God's promises and how God remained faithful to those promises. In response to this, Imfeld began to think about the promises God has made to him and how God had remained faithful to him in the past.

"I learned a lot about God being my companion and not just my Lord," explained Imfeld. "God's faithfulness is not affected in the slightest by my reaction or in my circumstances. So many times, I would be discouraged because of the ways I was responding to situations. But God's grace is huge, and it doesn't differentiate based on the trial."

Smithers, on the other hand, was in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 and was in self-quarantine from October 4-16.

Before quarantine, Smithers was physically and emotionally drained. She spent all summer working for a Christian camp, then directly moved into Cedarville. By the time midterms arrived, Smithers was at the end of her strength.

“I was so ready to be done. I was looking at all the assignments I had to do for that week and the weeks after and I could not do this on my own,” said Smithers. “So when I learned I was placed in quarantine, I started sobbing because I knew that was the Lord’s answer to my prayer. Yes, he provides endurance and provides strength, but sometimes he just calls us to rest.”

While in quarantine at home, Smithers read the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42 and realized how much of a “Martha” she had been in the months prior, meaning she tends to continually work instead of resting at Jesus’ feet. She decided to take the extra time to grow in her faith in God and learn to rest in him.

At home, the Smithers family was going through a lot of change. Smithers’ father was in the middle of changing jobs, and the family was in the midst of moving out of their house where they had lived the last 20 years. Being home meant Smithers could support her family from a safe 6 feet apart.

“I am so glad that I have a hope that lasts, because it is the only reason that I can look at this time of quarantine and be thankful for it,” explained Smithers. “I don’t have to think I wasted two weeks of my life because God is sovereign and his plan is so much better than what we could know.”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,550 undergraduate, graduate and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.

Written by Nicole Hackett

Photo by Scott Huck, Cedarville University